powerful, were not yet the dominant force which a century later they were to become. They could look back on a not distant past, in which their swift rise to prosperity had been regarded with suspicion, as the emergence of an alien interest, which applied sordid means to the pursuit of anti-social ends—an interest for which in a well-ordered commonwealth there was little room, and which had been rapped on the knuckles by conservative statesmen. They lived in a present, where a Government, at once interfering, inefficient and extravagant, cultivated, with an intolerable iteration of grandiloquent principles, every shift and artifice most repugnant to the sober prudence of plain-dealing men. The less reputable courtiers and the more feather-pated provincial gentry, while courting them to raise a mortgage or renew a loan, reviled them as *parvenus^* usurers and blood-suckers. Even in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the influence of the *rentier* and of the financier still continued to cause apprehension and jealousy, both for political and for economic reasons.[11] By this single stratagem/' wrote an indignant pamphleteer of the Puritan capitalists who specialized in money-lending, " they avoyd all contributions of tithes and taxes to the King, Church, Poor (a soverain cordial to tender consciences) ; they decline all services

and offices of burthen incident to visible estates ; they escape all oaths and ties of publick allegiance, or private fealty. . . . They enjoy both the secular applause of prudent conduct, and withal the spiritual comfort of thriving easily and devoutly . . „ leaving their adversaries the censures of improvidence, together with the misery of decay. They keep many of the nobility and gentry in perfect vassalage (as their poor copyholders), which eclipses honour, enervates justice, and ofttimes protects them in their boldest conceptions. By engrossing cash and credit, they in effect give the price to land and law to markets. By commanding ready money, they likewise command such offices as they